

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

FOR

TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

Archaeological studies are required to fulfill the legal obligations of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in completing the Section 106 process. The archaeological assessment of a project area by a professional archaeologist should consist of an archaeological survey to identify and evaluate the significance, or National Register eligibility, of archaeological resources or districts within the proposed project's areas of potential effect. Each resource or district, individually or in total with other resources or districts, should be evaluated for significance. Resource significance is based on the National Register criteria for evaluation (36 CFR 60.4). In most cases, archaeological resources would be eligible under criterion (d): resources "that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history."

Planning for Archaeological Investigations

The smooth integration of archaeology with an environmental effects assessment of the planned project depends upon four things:

1. involving archaeology early;
2. developing an appropriate scope of services or level of archaeological investigation;
3. finding a qualified archaeological consultant; and,
4. submitting an adequate report.

The early involvement of archaeology provides time to deal with any significant findings or problems. In the early stages of project planning, an in-house review of the project area, or a reconnaissance survey (Phase I) level of investigation may provide adequate information; at a later date, an intensive investigation (Phase II) survey may be warranted. In some circumstances, extensive excavation or testing of a site or sites may be involved.

Establish the Area of Potential Effect

Project boundaries must be specific. All land disturbing activities must be described. In all cases, the property (whether it is to be acquired, transformed, enhanced, preserved, controlled, rehabilitated, improved, or researched) must be inventoried. The anticipated effects that any and all activities would have on the property and any of its archaeological resources should be addressed.

Types or Levels of Archaeological Surveys

The survey of a property for archaeological resources may consist of an in-house review or a field survey, or both. For an in-house review of a project, which is required, the following information must be submitted to the Office of Environment/Location:

1. a legible copy of the USGS map with the project location area;
2. a plan map of the project boundaries (indicating areas to be disturbed);
3. an explicit written description of the proposed project; and,
4. photographs of the project area.

In some instances, an in-house review of the project documentation for archaeological resources would suffice; however, based on the environmental and historic characteristics of the landscape, further review of the area of potential effect of the proposed project may be required.

For those projects recommended for additional or further archaeological investigation (beyond the in-house review), the selection of a specific survey methodology should be based on a variety of factors:

1. the size of the area to be surveyed;
2. the geology and geography of the area;
3. the types and number of the prehistoric and historic resources known and anticipated;
4. the degree of ground cover;
5. the degree of land disturbance, and agency management objectives.

Reconnaissance Survey

A reconnaissance survey, or Phase I survey, is designed to characterize the archaeology of a region, identifying those areas where archaeological sites are likely to be found. This survey serves to formalize expectations of site presence, type, distribution and condition. Some sites may be identified through background research (reports of previous research or State Site Files). The time needed to conduct the survey should vary with the location of the project, the area of potential effect, and the number, distribution and condition of the archaeological resources. A reconnaissance survey may provide adequate information for evaluating design options or setting design priorities. A preliminary assessment of probable effects and any recommendations for additional survey or testing would be addressed in a reconnaissance level or Phase I report.

Intensive Survey

An intensive survey, or Phase II survey, consists of a thorough archaeological survey of an area of potential effect for the purpose of recovering sufficient information for evaluating the setting, integrity and significance of all identified archaeological resources. The survey should be structured to obtain enough information about each

resource to develop a fully justified evaluation of National Register eligibility or ineligibility and a plan of avoidance or mitigation.

Testing should not proceed beyond the point of providing sufficient information for evaluations of eligibility for the National Register and for planning property management. The report of the intensive survey should include description of all identified resources, graphics showing the extent of boundaries of each resource, a summary of the survey findings, photographs of all eligible resources, an assessment of probable effects(s) of the project to all resources, a plan for avoidance or mitigation, a statement of curation identifying a known facility which meets the federal curation standards (36 CFR Part 79), and completed Georgia Archaeological Survey forms for all identified archaeological resources.

Survey Results

No Archaeological Resources Found

When an archaeological survey fails to locate any archaeological resources within the area of potential environmental effect of the proposed project, the negative findings (no archaeological resources) will be reported to the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) by the Department. A determination of “No Effect” to the archaeological resources would be recommended for the project.

No Eligible Archaeological Resources Found

The documentation for archaeological surveys resulting in findings of no eligible archaeological resources will be submitted through the Department to HPD for review and concurrence in a formal report adhering to the “Minimum Contents Standards” with supporting documentation indicating the project boundary and level of disturbance, the intensity or level and boundary of the archaeological survey, and the survey results. For each site discovered within the project’s area of potential environmental effect, the original and one copy of a completed Georgia Archaeological Survey form will be forwarded to the Department and HPD. A statement justifying the recommendation of ineligible for inclusion in the National Register, based on the criteria of eligibility (36 CFR 60.4) should be provided for each archaeological resource. A determination of No Adverse Effect to eligible archaeological resources would be recommended for the project.

Findings of Eligible Resources

Following archaeological surveys resulting in the discovery of a resource or resources recommended eligible for the National Register an Effects Assessment must be determined and documented. Additional archaeological investigations or documentation and technical assistance from the HPD may be required.

Special Procedures Regarding Burials

In addition to the federal regulations, the State of Georgia requires that the HPD be notified of archaeological investigations when human remains are anticipated or are unexpectedly encountered during excavations. The HPD is subsequently required to

notify the Georgia Council on Native American Concerns if the human remains are suspected to be those of Native Americans. Disposition of the Native American human remains after excavation and scientific examination would involve the Council (as representatives of the Native American population).

All correspondence regarding the archaeological review or survey of a proposed project should be addressed to:

State Environmental/Location Engineer
Georgia Department of Transportation
Office of Environment/Location
3993 Aviation Circle
Atlanta, GA 30336-1593